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## Manifesto for Socialism

MAKE NO MISTAKE: THE ISSUE AT THIS ELECTION IS - DO YOU STAY WITH CAPITALISM OR GO FOR SOCIALISM?

After eight years of wars with the widespread use of cluster-bombs and depleted uranium - the insane destruction of cities, towns and villages, and the ruthless slaughter of many tens of thousands of men, women and children in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq - are you going to use your vote to soil your hands with more working class blood?

This is capitalism run by the Labour Party. The Tories have supported all of this. The Lib Dems, while seeking to score moral points, like the others support capitalism. They are all guilty. The Green Party, UKIP and Respect, etc, in seeking to retain capitalism, will retain its inevitable consequences.

Promising yet more reforms in education, the NHS, "*welfare*" and pensions is an open admission of the failure of all past such policies. This is all they have to offer - more misery.

Future working class poverty is guaranteed, both in retirement and at work. The National Minimum Wage is set to "*rise*" from £4.85 per hour to £5.05 in October and to £5.35 in 2006. Blair says about 1.4 million people are affected. The 18 to 21 year olds' rate will rise from £4.10 to £4.25 per hour.

Blair claims this is a "*powerful symbol of how Britain is changing for the good*". This, from the man paying £3.6 million for a house on the back of working class poverty.

In a country where, after eight years of his Labour government: "*... the top 1% of the population now receive more of the nation's income than at any time since the 1930's.*"

The Office for National Statistics reports that this group of 600,000 people doubled its wealth to £797 bn in Labour's first six years. The share of national wealth taken by these super-rich has grown from 20 to 23%, while the share of the poorest 50% shrank from 10% in 1986 to 5% in 2002.

NEW STATESMAN, 7 March 2005

UNICEF (1 March 2005) reports that 15.4% of UK children live in poverty. According to ACTION AID (28 February 2005), over 40% of all aid is tied to overpriced goods from donor countries. What likelihood likelihood is there of world poverty being halved in 2015?

In the "*health*" service, 67,000 operations were cancelled in 2004: 10,000 more than five years ago. Dentists and nurses are recruited from overseas in desperation to meet urgent needs. The Royal College of Surgeons says *there will be a 2,700 shortfall of surgeons by 2010*. With 858,000 already on waiting lists, a further 14,000 were added in December 2004.

Capitalism cannot be reformed to work humanely without poverty and war. This is why The SPGB insists the issue is capitalism versus Socialism.

Socialism does *not* mean Labour Party stunts such as nationalisation and poverty reforms - it means the world-wide common ownership of the earth, its industries and resources, so that production can be carried on to meet human needs instead of filling the gold-coffers of the richest 1% or so.

Labour-run capitalism has meant Belmarsh prison detaining people without trial or charge, for more than three years - and UK involvement in Guantanamo Bay with the torture of prisoners also held without charge or trial. Blair says: "*There is no greater liberty than to live free from terrorist attack*". He cannot guarantee safety from the terror which he and his US allies have helped create with their wars. His Labour government sell arms around the world regardless of whose lives and "*liberties*" are threatened.

For as long as capitalism remains this is how the world will be. The need to establish Socialism has never been greater.

## A WORD IN YOUR EAR

When voting, Socialists write the word Socialism diagonally across the ballot paper from bottom left to top right. The fact that no Socialist candidates are standing is a tragedy created by the willingness of workers so far to be deluded by the parties of capitalism. You alone as working-class voters can remedy this situation. The minority who are already Socialists are doing all they can.

If you think expressing your demand for Socialism in this way is a futile gesture, how much more futile is it to swallow all the phoney 'issues' endlessly trotted out at every election about the NNS, education, asylum seekers and pensioners? Everything is expressed in terms of money. Remember, as workers we too have a price: that is the wage or salary for which we sell our working skills on the labour market to keep capitalism running profitably for the owning class.

Is it not time to end this mad-house and establish Socialism - common ownership and production solely to satisfy human needs?

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# Capitalism: Competitive, Insecure and Unpleasant

"*I'm stuck for words and nearly in tears*", said one MG Rover worker after hearing the news that he and nearly 5,000 of his fellow workers were to lose their jobs. The wife of another employee said that the workers had been "*let down by the government*" (BBC NEWS, 15 April 2005).

Being made redundant is not pleasant. It often means hardship, insecurity, leaving an area where friendships have been established, and entering a future of uncertainty. Yes, there will be tears but it is also a time for sober reflection. Shanghai Automotive, China's largest car firm, could not see a return on its investments if it took a 75% stake in the business. Shanghai Automotive are in business to make a profit. Workers are only employed when it is profitable to do so.

But what can governments do? Demonstrating at No 10 and signing petitions was a waste of frustrated anger. The Tory Government, under Thatcher, held the view that in business the weak should go to the wall. Unprofitable businesses were not going to be subsidised by the capitalist state. If a company did not make a profit, it would die and its workers would be made redundant. Blair's government shares this view. We live in capitalism, not a charity.

That the redundancies came at an election time opens a window of understanding. The vote gives workers a choice. They can either vote for capitalist politicians, and a social system that can never be run in their interest. Or they can vote for Socialism in which the means of production and distribution are democratically owned and controlled by all of society.

That few workers seem capable of drawing this political conclusion only sows the seed for a future life of intense competition, unpleasantness and insecurity.

#### NOTE TO READERS

If you agree with the Socialist case, then the next step is to apply for membership. If you want a world without unemployment, exploitation, war, poverty, discomfort and inequality, you should seriously consider joining us.

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## Mr Blair's Little Red Book

Election manifestoes are dreary reading. The General Election has caused Labour's wordsmiths to produce a ghastly booklet, priced at £2.50 (the same as the Tories' effort). Even professional journalists have had a problem with this election. A headline groaned: "*The more we see party leaders, the less we like them*" (THE INDEPENDENT, 25 April 2005). Above a picture of Blair grinning from ear to ear, THE ECONOMIST (30 April) declared: "*There is no alternative (alas)*". Andrew Neil pointed out that, in four years' time, the difference in the tax take between a Tory and a Labour government would amount to a mere 0.3% of GNP, and protested: "*where's the vision in a decimal point of a difference?*" (BBC2, DAILY POLITICS, 3 May).

Labour has appealed for votes on the feeble 'lesser of two evils' grounds. Again we have seen the disgusting spectacle of politicians appealing to us and our fellow workers by bidding up their promises, whilst withholding information on decisions in the pipeline which they fear might have a negative effect on their electoral chances. Once again we know that the vast majority of workers will have no interest at all in voting for a Socialist candidate, just as we also know that there is not one Socialist candidate for whom any of us would cast our votes.

Some 50 years ago, Socialists argued:

The Labour Party has no horizons beyond those of capitalism and when all the schemes have been put into operation the position of the working class will be exactly the same. The past record of the labour Party in supporting wars, freezing wages, breaking strikes, and forming coalitions, with Tories and Liberals, should be enough to finish them with the working class for keeps; the tragedy is that it won't...

... Although from time to time they paid lip-service by using Socialist-sounding phrases when it met their purpose of deluding the workers, nothing they have ever said or done has advanced the workers one inch. While certain of their reforms might have helped in keeping workers contented and in staving off unrest, they have had the desired effect of giving the boss class a new lease of life. What would the capitalist class do without a Labour Party to patch up their vile system for them? SOCIALIST STANDARD, April 1955

In 1997 (The SPGB NO 23), we noted that 'New' Labour had the support of Murdoch's SUN newspaper and other

papers that supported business interests. THE SUN and other papers largely still do support Blair's party. We pointed out that Blair and his colleagues were making very few promises: that their policies would make very little difference to workers, to pensioners, to the unemployed and those on 'benefits' or relying on social services, to the low-paid, or to the trade unions.

The much vaunted minimum wage was set at a very low rate, as required by business interests. Moreover, as the employment of so many casual migrant workers has shown, it is very easy for employers and gangmasters to evade this 'minimum'. This was easily predicted:

Employers and workers alike would find ways around a Government minimum wage policy just as they do with the Health and Safety at Work legislation. For the low-paid, an increase in their basic pay would be largely wiped out by cuts in their Housing and other welfare benefits. A minimum wage does not solve the problem of poverty. The SPGB, NO 23 (April 1997)

Blair's government has been consistently hostile to trade union action to raise wages or protect their members' interests, for instance, concerning pensions, redundancies, or health and safety issues. It has used troops to break the firemen's strikes, and it has obstinately declined to restore trade union legal rights removed by the Thatcher government. More and more workers, especially in the retail sector or in call-centres, are forced to work on Sundays; more and more are now working as casual labour, or hired out via agencies, meaning a loss of paid holidays, sick leave or pension entitlements; more and more must work on after reaching retirement age.

In the Labour Party manifesto, BRITAIN FORWARD NOT BACK (chapter 1) there is a claim that this government has achieved a "*low-debt/high-employment economy*".

Yet debt at all levels has been soaring. Students leave university with unbelievable levels of debt. House-buyers, faced with soaring house prices, live in homes mortgaged well beyond their ability to repay. Many key workers, such as teachers, nurses, and social workers, especially but not only in London and the South East, cannot afford to buy since house prices have been rising well beyond their reach. Personal debt has also grown, fuelled by the competing credit card companies, and consumer debt is now at well over 150% of average incomes. Pawnshops are busy too. Moreover, there has been a growing trade deficit in goods and services, reaching over £107bn in the 12 mths to February (THE ECONOMIST, 16 April 2005). So much for this vaunted "*low-debt*" economy.

As for "*high employment*", during the period since 'New' Labour took over managing British capitalism from the Tories, the decline of manufacturing has continued as before: almost 1 million manufacturing jobs have been lost since 1997. On the same day that Blair and Brown were launching their election manifesto, the latest unemployment figures were announced:

On the internationally recognised ILO measure, unemployment rose by 29,000 to 1.43 million in the three months to February, a rise of 4.8 per cent.... Manufacturing jobs hit a record low of 3.23 million after the loss of 85,000 positions in the quarter to February, compared with the figure a year ago. THE INDEPENDENT, 14 April 2005

Since then the collapse of the Midlands car firm, MG Rover, with the loss of thousands of jobs in Rover itself, plus many more in firms supplying the company and in its dealerships around the country, will have added significantly to this earlier figure. Marconi is in trouble, having failed to get a key contract, and IBM is laying off workers too. In the retail sector, it is a time of mergers, takeovers and bankruptcies.

Only a few years after Blair arrived in Downing Street, the 'dot com' boom crashed:

According to the Department of Trade and Industry, business failures in England and Wales are at their highest level for six years... A year ago many venture capitalists were eager to back all kinds of [dot com] projects because they believed that, with the stock market so hot, there was easy money to be made through initial public offerings. EVENING STANDARD, 13 November 2000

The fact that the Labour manifesto has apparently redefined 'full employment' is of academic interest. No government can control the ups and downs of the business cycle – though all governments like to claim the credit

when the economy, no thanks to them, is booming.

The Labour Party has at times claimed to stand for equality but at other times for ‘equality of opportunity’. The 2005 manifesto declares: “*we will build new ladders of social mobility and advancement...*”(p19).

To avoid any reference to poverty, the vocabulary is doctored: “*the best way to tackle exclusion is to give choice and power to those left behind*” (p109). But with the right audience (e.g. the CBI’s annual dinner, 17 May 2000), Blair is open about his priorities:

Enterprise should be encouraged through a good climate for business and a tax system which rewards success...

He argued for attacking Iraq because of Saddam’s possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), saying: “*I have never put the justification for action as regime change*” (HANSARD, 18 March 2003). But since there were no weapons of ‘mass destruction’, he now argues on regime change as the issue.

Socialists do not share the Liberals’ legal or moral qualms about the Iraq war. Our arguments against this war are on the same grounds that we have opposed other wars. We argue that wars are fought over capitalist interests, not in the interests of the working class. Whichever side wins, the oil wells etc remain the property of the capitalist class. The workers have nothing to gain from fighting against their fellow workers.

Nor can they gain by switching their votes from Tweedledum to Tweedledee, from one set of capitalist politicians to another. Socialism alone is the answer.

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## Blairism and Child Poverty, Housing and Health

Tony Blair, or *Bliar* as he is increasingly known to wags, boasted in 2003 that child poverty in Britain would be eradicated in twenty years’ time. There are 18 years left, and this boast already looks like empty wind.

The charity Shelter - a living embodiment of the failure of reform to solve the housing question – reveals that the number of homeless families living in ‘bed and breakfast’ and temporary accommodation has doubled since Labour came to power in 1997 (THE INDEPENDENT, 19 March 2005).

Among them are 116,000 children. Conditions for some are so cramped that children’s skulls are becoming deformed by sleeping in push chairs instead of mattresses.

Not that there are not enough architects, construction workers and materials to house everyone adequately. The reality is that it is not profitable to do so.

As Engels noted in THE HOUSING QUESTION, written in the 19th century, poor housing is only one social problem among many. To solve the housing problem, like any other social problem facing the working class, requires workers to replace capitalism with socialism.

In the US, as elsewhere, only the rich get first class health care. This applies to flu vaccines. Last autumn there was a shortage of vaccine and one woman died queuing for a jab in the California heat. Thieves in Washington stole 900 doses and black market jabs fetching 10 times normal prices. Patients rioting outside clinics (EVENING STANDARD, 26 October 2004).

The problem was compounded by the fact that half of the US supplies came from a Liverpool factory bought for £542m by Chiron, a US multinational, from one Paul Drayson. Who? Paul Drayson is a multi-millionaire friend of Tony. He is a big donor to the Labour Party. He was ennobled by Blair this year, and then gave £505,000 to the Labour Party.

Lord Drayson became infamous for selling the Ministry of Defence smallpox jabs while giving cash to Blair’s party.



He sold up his business to Chiron for a vast profit just months before the US Department of Health halted the flu jab line amid contamination fears. Too late for workers and pensioners in the US. A miserable winter awaited them all.

*Postscript:* Lord Drayton is now a junior government Minister – in the Ministry of Defence, but of course. But what exactly is he planning to sell to the MOD?

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# Classes, Class Struggle and The Labour Party

According to THE INDEPENDENT (28 March 2005), the Labour Party has a big idea and it will go into their general election manifesto. And the big idea is that in their fourth term in office, a Labour Government will end the existence of classes and create a classless society. We have Alan Milburn's word for it.

In his excellent little book "ON BULLSHIT", the philosopher H G Frankfurt finds that bullshit derives from a false sincerity which clings to the utterances of politicians when they want our votes. And that is exactly what Labour's promise amounts to: bullshit.

Of course, the Labour Party is not alone in making these empty pronouncements. The Conservative Party is just as bad. Lady Thatcher once claimed that if Harold Macmillan had won another election he would have established a classless society. John Major also made the fatuous boast that his government was going to create a classless society.

At least these claims admit that there is a class society, although what these politicians understand by 'class' is as trivial as their promises to abolish poverty, war and unemployment.

Class is bound up with private property ownership relations of production. And the only valid explanation for class is a Marxian one.

With the development of social production beyond primitive communism, the community becomes divided into groups occupying different places in social production as a whole, with different relations to the means of production, and therefore different methods of acquiring their share of what society produces. Such groups constitute social classes, and their relationships to each other and to the means of production constitute class relations with respective class interests.

The existence of classes is a consequence of the division of labour in social production with the means of production becoming the private property of one group or class.

Marx put it this way: "*The various stages of development in the division of labour are just so many different forms of ownership*".

Marx went on to say:

That is, the existing stage in the division of labour determines also the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the materials, instruments and products of labour.

## THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY

What constitutes and distinguishes classes is not primarily differences in income, education or habits, as Mr Milburn argued in his INDEPENDENT interview, but the places they occupy in social production and the relations in which they stand to the means of production. This is what determines their type of income - earned in the case of the working class and unearned in the case of the capitalist class, what they think, and the way in which they live their lives.

With classes, there arise class interests, class conflict and class struggle.

Classes are in conflict when the places they occupy in the system of social production are such that one class obtains

and consumes social wealth at the expense of another class. In capitalism, the capitalist class receive their profit from the exploitation of the working class. The working class produce more social wealth than they receive in wages and salaries. There is a constant struggle over the extent and intensity of exploitation as the capitalist class try to increase their profit while the working class resist and try to gain more pay.

Capitalist society based on class exploitation is inevitably divided into antagonistic classes. Such a society is torn by class conflict between exploiters and the exploited.

These class struggles are rooted in conflicts of material interest between the different classes – conflicting economic interests arising from the different places occupied by different classes in social production, their different relations to the means of production, and their different means of obtaining and consuming social wealth.

For this reason, Marx opened the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO with these words: “*the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle*”. Capitalism, he argued, was the last class-divided social system and it was the working class who were going to replace capitalism with socialism/communism through conscious and political action.

For Marx and Engels, as it is to Socialists, a classless society is only possible when the means of production and distribution are commonly owned and democratically controlled by all of society.

So what does Labour’s boast of a classless society amount to? For a start, they have no intention of removing the exploitative capital-labour relationship. They have no interest in transforming private property ownership into common ownership. They are all for the capitalist class and obediently sit at the dinner table of the rich. A classless society the Labour Party is unable to deliver. However, as empty rhetoric, it captures the sentiment expressed by H. G. Frankfurt: “*Bullshit!*”!

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## Prince of Darkness

First published in 1996, as Tony Blair was making his way to Downing Street, THE BLAIR REVOLUTION by Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle was a justification of what was to become a set of policies which would result in attacks against the working class, three wars, and sleaze and corruption which would engulf Mandelson himself.

Six years later, Mandelson tried to justify the Labour Party’s anti-working class policies in a new book, THE BLAIR REVOLUTION REVISITED (Politico 2002). Like many ex-Leftwing activists, Mandelson started life in the Young Communist League. Odd that he uses the term “*revolution*” to describe New Labour under Blair - reaction would be nearer the mark.

This book is a glossy apologetic, an obsequious bow to the Labour Government. The text is uncritical, sleaze and corruption are played down, the wars are glossed over, and Mandelson’s own craving to sit at the table of the rich is conveniently ignored. His remark that “*we are all Thatcherites now*” is missing from the text. So too is his comment that New Labour is “at ease with the rich”. And he should know since his double departure from the Labour Government was precisely due to the fact that he was too comfortable with the rich - from the multi-millionaire Geoffrey Robinson who gave him a secret loan of £373,000 to buy a house with a smart London address, to the wealthy Hinduja brothers and their bid to become British citizens.

What the book does highlight is the crass political ignorance of the author, especially when Mandelson comes to discuss the question of Socialism and Marxism.

Mandelson believes that opponents claim that “*the Blair revolution is dumping Socialism*” (p29). Wrong. There was never any socialism in the Labour Party to dump. Labour has always supported British capitalism, the wages system, and class exploitation. Its old Clause 4 policy was merely a nod towards state capitalism.

Mandelson believes that there have always been two clearly dominant families of Socialist thought:

*the Marxist school and the less dogmatic ethical school in which it is a body of core values that matter* (p29).

What “*core values*” the Labour Party hold dear we are not told. Presumably the values that use troops to break the Fire Fighters’ strike. Values that see the state obtain information extracted from supposed terrorists through torture by proxy.

Values that bomb innocent men, women and children. Values that see Labour Ministers prostitute themselves to the rich. And values that result in Labour governments pursuing capitalist policies no different to those of the Tories.

So what is the difference between the Thatcher and Major governments, and the current Blair administration? They have all supported world capitalism. They have all supported globalisation with free trade and protectionist policies when it suits them. They have mistakenly claimed that, instead of the working class, it is the capitalist class who are the wealth creators. Blair stuffs his Policy Units and Quangos with capitalists and chief executives from the private sector. He shares with Thatcher a theological belief in the market and advocates the current ruling class ideology of economic liberalism.

Mandelson claims that ‘old Labour’ was never Marxist but was “*influenced by Marxist thought*” (p29). When? When did Labour Governments from MacDonald to Callaghan ever want to end capitalism? No, capitalism was enthusiastically embraced by every Labour government. The rot set in right from the beginning. In his book *SERFDOM TO SOCIALISM* (1907), Keir Hardie erroneously claimed that the ‘socialism’ of the Labour Party and Independent Labour Party was Christianity, with the Sermon on the Mount a ‘socialist’ manifesto. No prospective Labour MP has ever stood for the abolition of the wages system. The Labour Party have had members who supported Russian state capitalism but Russia, from 1917 until 1989, was never Socialist.

Mandelson derides Marxism as being “*quasi-scientific*” and a world-view that rests on “*economic determinism and class analysis, propounded by those who claim to speak for the working class*”(loc cit). But Marxism is scientific. It rests on a theory of history which is demonstrably true. Marxism shows that capitalism has an origin and termination in the class struggle. Marxism shows that profit is made by the exploitation of the workers at the point of production. And Marxism has as its agents of change not those who “*speak for the working class*” but the working class itself.

Mandelson goes on to state that this “*socialism [was] always out of kilter with the real world*” and that “*this socialism of centralised state control of industry offers nothing of an understanding of how the modern market can be helped to prosper*”(loc cit) What is “*the real world*”? It is a world of competitive nation states and war, of class exploitation, of unnecessary poverty, social alienation, and starvation.

What is not in the real world is the utopian belief held by politicians like Mandelson that you can have capitalism without the negative effects of capitalism.

And Socialism has nothing to do with state capitalism. Common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution has nothing to do with nationalisation or state control. Centralised state control of industry was a failed policy of Lenin and his followers, a policy once supported by Mandelson himself.

And state control of industry was first favoured by the Tories in the 1840s when they set about nationalising the railways. The Tories could hardly be called “socialists”. During war-time, a fact of life under capitalism, Liberals, Tories and Labour have all favoured state control of industry. The reality is that this has nothing to do with Marx or Socialism.

As for the market: it fails. The market is quite uncaring and ruthless. When workers are unprofitable to employ, they are sacked. The market cannot deliver goods and services to meet all of society’s needs. Capitalism is a system of profit-making run for the benefit of the rich. Capitalism can never be made to run in the interests of all society.

Mandelson then claims that this ‘socialism’ has a “*blind belief in the State*” and that its “*narrow view of class offers no insights into today’s pluralist society in which the wrongs of race and gender matter just as much as those caused by social background*” (loc cit)



Wrong. Marxists have always seen the State as an institution of class power and coercion. The state exists to conserve the monopoly and privilege of the capitalist class. True, the state has to be conquered politically by a class-conscious working class for Socialism to be possible. But, once that task has been accomplished and production for profit has given way to production for social use, the state machinery, as Engels put it, “*withers away*”.

As for class, it carries a greater weight than the politics of gender and race for one very important reason. Workers are afflicted by racial and sexual prejudice, and Labour governments, including the present one, have been swift to exploit prejudice for political gain. However, class politics is not only a social relationship between groups of people but - and this is the crucial point - it is also a relation between classes and their relationship to the means of production and distribution. That is why, when the workers abolish class relations, this will also involve the emancipation of men and women without distinction of race or sex. Racism and gender discrimination, like religion and nationalism, are part and parcel of capitalism.

Mandelson concludes that, following the so-called ‘collapse of Communism’, Marxism is finished as an option “*for all but the extreme left*” (p30). But Communism has never existed for it to fail. Communism or Socialism – both mean the same and require the abolition of the wages system - is still an urgent necessity if war, unemployment and poverty are to be abolished.

Mandelson’s sketch of Marxism is a caricature of the real thing. It does not say much for his degree in politics from Oxford or his time spent as a member of the Communist Party. For a start, Marx was not an “economic determinist”. The following quotation shows a far greater subtlety concerning the relationship between men and women making history, and the circumstances in which they make history:

*Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.*  
THE EIGHTEENTH BRUMAIRE OF LOUIS BONAPARTE

## Ethical Capitalism

Mandelson supports “*the other tradition*” which he calls “*ethical socialism*”. He believes it has “*stood the test of time*”.

He describes this as socialism “*based on a set of beliefs and values*”:

*it is founded on the simple notion that human beings are socially interdependent and cannot be divorced from the society they live in* (p30).

This foundation stone is a simplistic truism and means all things to all men.

Marx on the other hand wrote the following set of propositions as a scientific appraisal of society:

*In the social production which men carry out they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite state of development of their material forces of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society – the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the social, political and intellectual life processes in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.*

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY, Preface, 1859

The difference is like the difference between chalk and cheese.

Mandelson concludes:

If it is socialist to be committed to community and a strong society, to justice and fairness, to maximising the life chances of all our people and preventing the exclusion from society of any, then New Labour is Socialist (p30).

He then adds as a coda:

*New Labour also believes in the market and in efficiency and in the need to compete. We know that we live in the new global economy, and that there is no alternative to that...*

*We stand for a strong society and an efficient economy because we need both, and each needs the other. That is the essence of our belief in One Nation policies and the principle of the stakeholder economy (p30).*

Of course, the ‘Socialism’ advocated by Mandelson is not Socialism at all. There is nothing new about the politics of Mandelson: in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, Marx derided this reactionary politics as “*Conservative, or Bourgeois, Socialism*”.

Here is what Marx had to say:

*A part of the bourgeoisie... desirous of redressing social grievances, in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society... to this section belong economists, philanthropists, improvers of the condition of the working class, organisers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, hole-in-the-wall reformers of every imaginable kind.*

We would also add Mandelson and Blair and the authors of the so-called New Labour project. As reactionaries, they want all the advantages of capitalism without the class struggle.

As Marx noted:

*The bourgeoisie naturally conceives the world in which it is supreme to be the best... it but requires, in reality, that the proletariat should remain within the bounds of existing society, but should cast away all its hateful ideas concerning the bourgeoisie.*

And for New Labour this means embracing “*the principle of the stakeholder economy*” where worker and capitalist co-exist in harmonious peace, each with a common interest for the good of British Capitalism. And Mandelson lectures Socialists for being Utopian! This nonsense was being advocated in the 19th century by economists like Carey and Bastiat. As Marx contemptuously derided this cynical and reactionary politics: “*the bourgeois is a bourgeois - for the benefit of the working class.*”

## LABOUR’S EXCUSES

The general defence of the Labour Cabinet was that they were the victims of an “economic blizzard.” But it was precisely because they professed to be able to protect the workers against such blizzards that they went into office. “Economic blizzards” are a normal and recurrent feature of Capitalism... It is not possible for the Labour Party or any other party to administer Capitalism in such a way that the workers’ problems can be solved within the framework of the existing system.

QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, The SPGB pamphlet, 1932, pp42-43

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# TINA OR TIARA?

With the collapse in the late 1980s of State Capitalism in Eastern Europe and the demonstrable failure of the Labour policies of nationalisation and ‘tax and spend’, Margaret Thatcher, then Tory Prime Minister, barked out to the world “*there is no alternative*” to the market. This dogma, known contemptuously as TINA, has been echoed by Tony Blair’s Labour government who have fallen in love with the rich and follow capital like pigs to the trough. Blair and his cronies see no alternative to global markets, world capitalism, market forces, competition and markets.

Tina recently reared its ugly head again in a speech by Supachal Panitchpakdi (director general of the World Trade Organisation) to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. He concluded his speech by declaring: “*we have learned that there is no alternative to the global trading system*” (THE INDEPENDENT, 1 April 2005).

TINA! TINA! TINA! is the mantra of the Thatchers and the Blairs who cannot conceive a social system beyond capitalism. You would hardly find alternatives to capitalism being discussed by the economists at the WTO, any more than you would at the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund. Why would you expect them to? Could they ever admit there was a practical and reasonable alternative to capitalism? Could they ever declare “*there is a realistic alternative*”? Could they replace *TINA* with *TIARA*? Of course not. They are as likely to consider an alternative to capitalism as a priest is to embrace non-belief in God. Supporters of TINA are capitalism’s yes-men and women. They are paid to defend capitalism not to search for alternatives.

## From TINA to TIARA

If capitalism’s secular priests are incapable of changing their mantra “*TINA, TINA, TINA*”, the same cannot be said of the working class. Workers have no interest in capitalism. It can never be run in their interests. For the working class, there has to be a practical alternative to capitalism, and that alternative is Socialism.

And the practical alternative to capitalism has nothing to do with the failure of Leninism or Labour’s Clause IV. Socialism means the abolition of capitalism, not its retention. Socialism means no markets, no wages system, no employers, no labour market.

And Socialism can be established whenever the working class want to. All that is stopping workers is themselves. Only through workers supporting capitalist politicians does capitalism pass on from one economic crisis to another, from one war to another, and from one day of class exploitation to the next.

Socialism is such a simple and reasonable proposition. Socialism means that production would be for social use, and not profit. So there is a real alternative to capitalism. TIARA instead of TINA. Socialism instead of capitalism.

## Thinking outside the capitalist box

The reason why economists and politicians believe that there is no alternative to the market is their unquestioned belief in private property ownership, employers, commodity production and exchange for profit, reflected in the subject matter of economics. Sir Lionel Robbins, an economist, once defined economics as:

*the science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses.*

THE NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ECONOMIC SCIENCE, 1932

But if “*science*” entails checking theory against reality and “*studies*” means attention to the real world, the Robbins definition of economics does not pass his test for it being a science. It is merely a set of ideas and beliefs justifying capitalism.

Take scarcity. In Socialism there will be some scarce resources. This is not a problem. It means that socialist society will have to prioritise what it does with these scarce resources, and how they will be used. That said, there will not be the waste and inefficiency currently found under capitalism. Finite reserves of oil will not be used in producing weapons or used in war. Social labour will not be wasted in finance, state bureaucracies, and so on. Generally, production in socialism will ensure an abundance of goods and social labour to meet the needs of all society.

Moreover, scarcity in capitalism is manufactured. It is not natural, as Robbins supposed. Vast resources are not used now because it is not profitable to use them, even though there is a desperate social need. This applies to housing, food, and social labour. Resources exist to build adequate housing but if there is no profit in constructing them, these houses will not get built. During the last depression, there were stock piles of unused bricks, bags of cement, timber, and social labour all unused, not because of scarcity, but because it was not profitable to use them. As for food,

agricultural land is regularly taken out of use to prop-up food prices. Fruit and vegetables are destroyed, and farmers are paid not to produce.

So economics, the economics that supports private property ownership, employers, the profit motive, and the mantra “*there is no alternative*”, is a fiction. What workers should be doing is thinking outside the capitalist box. They should be seeking alternatives that accord with their own class interests, interests that are theirs alone. And there is a real alternative to world capitalism: World Socialism.

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## Dutch Capitalism - From Miracle to Nightmare

Dutch capitalism was held up by economists and politicians as a miracle economy to admire and follow. After two decades of strong growth and low unemployment, the trade cycle has turned for the worse.

Now growth has ground to a halt, and industrial production has fallen by 3.2% in the first three months of the year. Profits have fallen.

Unemployment figures were massaged. One in seven of the workforce have retired on disability benefits and are not seen in the unemployment statistics. The true rate of unemployment in the Dutch economy is believed to be 20% (BBC, 2 October 2004)

Only a few years ago Dutch capitalism was hailed as a prime example of the so-called Third Way by then US President Bill Clinton and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair. Former Dutch PM Wim Kok travelled the world to spread the word on the Third Way, or Polder Model, as they say in the Netherlands. The model took its name from the Low Countries’ land reclamation projects, which were called polders, and referred to policymaking by consensus between the government, unions and employers.

With rising unemployment and falling profits, the consensus is breaking up. A BBC NEWS report said:

*One in 20 Dutch workers are now without a job, contrasting sharply with only a few years ago when Dutch employers were desperately recruiting foreign workers to fill the employment gap.*

The consensus has now broken up. The partnership is no more. The Dutch capitalist state has to make “*painful choices*”, and these painful choices are going to fall on the working class. A set of austerity reforms have been enacted. The austerity package includes spending cuts, reforms to welfare support and health coverage, as well as a freeze on civil service salaries and the minimum wage.

Predictably it has created a wave of protest from trade unions and workers with demonstrations against the measures. The trade unions have accused the government of abandoning the “*traditional*” Dutch model of consensus-based labour relations.

However, there are a few lessons which workers in the Netherlands should reflect upon. You cannot have a “*partnership*” and “*consensus politics*” in a class- divided society.

The state is a capitalist state which exists to conserve the power and privilege of the capitalist class, and not the working class. When there is an economic crisis, it will always be the workers who will find times tough through lower wages and unemployment.

The lesson for the working class is that capitalism is anarchic and unpredictable. It passes through boom and bust, and there is nothing politicians and economists can do to prevent trade depressions occurring. Workers must realise that capitalism can never be made to work in their interests. There can never be consensus with employers and their state. There can never be a partnership within the exploitative framework of the wages system.

There can only be class struggle until the interests of the working class are realised through the abolition of capitalism and its replacement by Socialism.

## OBITUARY - COLIN GREEN

Our comrade Colin Green has died, aged 88. Faced with conscription into the armed forces in 1939, Colin had no hesitation in registering his principled objection. At a tribunal, he took the option of work on the land. A by-product of that experience and the knowledge gained resulted in his maintaining a double allotment near his Norfolk home until recent times.

After that war, he worked in the Port of London Authority (PLA) building, and this enabled him to be a frequent attender at the Party's lunchtime outdoor meetings at Tower Hill. In those years, he lived in Essex and was a member of branches in that county. A quiet and thoughtful man, he not only carried the platform at times to the speaking stations but was a competent spokesman of the case for Socialism on the platform. His love of cycling was used to enable him to attend meetings, sometimes at distant branches when in his seventies.

A devotee of cricket, he participated in the game at club level in Essex leagues - he was known as something of a demon bowler - , and later made a further contribution to the game as an umpire for many years. Music and reading occupied him greatly. He was always up to date with current events and their significance from a Socialist point of view: his bookcases held not only Wisdens but also contemporary books of a political vein.

Though not a member of the two expelled Branches, he quickly recognised the principled stand taken in reconstituting the Party, and resigned from Clapham to join us within a few months. He attended our June Summer Schools a number of times. Our respects to his wife Elsie, their daughter Barbara, and the family.

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# International Communist Current: Absurdities (Part 1)

Using the opportunity of last year's centenary of The SPGB, under the title *What is The SPGB?*, the International Communist Current published four articles in their journal, WORLD REVOLUTION.

They begin by saying:

*The SPGB is 100 years old this year... Formed in 1904 it has maintained the same platform through wars, revolution and recession... The question we have to ask, however, is whether this group genuinely offers a positive way forward to those proletarian minorities searching for a revolutionary critique of the present system.*

Thus, in their opening paragraph, the divergence of their views from those of The SPGB starts to emerge.

The only revolutions that have occurred since our formation in 1904 have replaced feudalism with capitalism. This includes Soviet Russia and China. The ICC does not accept this.

The SPGB is not a “group”, but a political party seeking to gain power for Socialism. We do not seek to offer a way forward for “proletarian minorities”; we see as urgent the need for the majority of the world's workers to understand Socialism, and organise politically and democratically to bring it about. Searching for a “revolutionary critique” is not the same as class-consciousness aimed at ending class-society. Who are these “minorities”? Those of the self-styled left believe they have a “revolutionary critique” but they are not interested in Socialism.

The divergence of ICC thinking from ours is very evident throughout. They assert that when the Party was formed: “At the global level, capitalism was entering the transition from its period of ascendance to its decadence” (part 1, p6). This is utter nonsense. Far from having been decadent which means declining for the last 100 years, capitalism has been potent and aggressive. It has increasingly applied science to technology, and ruthlessly applied both to

warfare. At a global level in 1904, vast areas had not even developed capitalism. This included Russia and China, also Japan, while India and Pakistan are only now becoming fully-fledged capitalist countries, and much of continental Africa is still tribal.

ICC devotion to Leninist mumbo-jumbo soon becomes apparent. We are accused of having failed to grasp “*the Marxist understanding of how consciousness develops in the working class*” and of “*failing to understand the relationship between the immediate struggles of the working class and its ultimate perspective*”(ibid.).

They claim that these “*two elements*” can be united. They believe the challenge faced by The SPGB was to overcome the separation between the day-to-day struggles of reformism and revolution.

As Marxists, we argue that consciousness develops as workers become aware of the contradictions inherent in the capitalist system, chief among these being the social production of wealth and the minority class-ownership of the means of wealth production.

If the ICC has some superior understanding, where are they applying it to develop consciousness?<

There is no relationship between immediate struggles and the revolutionary quest for Socialism. They are mutually exclusive of each other. Capitalism throws up an unending series of ‘issues’ which provide the raw material for endless day-to-day struggles so that, in practice, “*immediate*” becomes eternal. The working class must understand that capitalism cannot solve the problems it constantly re-creates, and see that the immediate need is to get rid of capitalism.

Votes of the ill-informed and confused are useless except for retaining capitalism.  
Votes backed by Socialist understanding will be the irresistible force for change.

The ICC go on to make a hash of attempting to be dismissive of our DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES. In two paragraphs (at the end of part 1, p6), they express the absurd idea that The SPGB remained sectarian because it rejected reformism in favour of revolution. A hundred years since our formation (to go back no further), all that reformism has produced is pressure for ever more reforms. The mess that world capitalism is in today bears eloquent testimony to its failure. Reformism, despite ICC claims to the contrary, has not contributed to the growth of consciousness.

The revolution for Socialism remains the solution awaiting working-class endorsement.

Having referred to Clause 5 of our DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES which argues that “*the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself*”, and finding themselves unable to attack this proposition, they fall back on the vague assertion that:

... within the Declaration can also be seen the basis of the democratic mystification and sectarianism that condemned The SPGB to sterility.

It is unfortunate for the ICC that democracy mystifies them. They share this in common with all leader-based organisations. How they can regard an appeal to a whole class to emancipate itself as “*sectarian*” can be explained only by an understanding of political illiteracy.

Clause 6 of our PRINCIPLES recognises, as did Marx in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, that “*the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie*”.

The bourgeoisie’s affairs, as Clause 6 states, consist of monopolising for the capitalists the wealth taken from the workers. The logic is irresistible that the working class must organise consciously and politically to conquer this coercive political apparatus to end the oppression of one class by another, by ending class society – “*the overthrow of privilege*”.

In their ignorance, the ICC imagines that this point ignores the lesson of the Paris Commune on the necessity to overthrow the capitalist state. The lesson here for them is that there is no parallel between the purely localised Paris



Commune and a conscious world movement to change society.

They fail to grasp the simple fact that the capture of political power by the workers is the overthrow of the bourgeois state. The fact that the Paris Commune was crushed by the state machine demonstrates the need for Clause 6.

Marx and Engels were writing before the suffrage became universal but urged workers to use it where it existed. This point is side-stepped by the ICC, which refers to the vote as only one means among many. They remain conveniently quiet about what these “*many*” others are. Neither do they show (because they cannot) that if the vote can be misused, what it may be that would prevent any of the other means from being misused.

Their tortuous protestations fall far short of making any argument against the case for Socialism uniquely presented by The SPGB. Votes of the ill-informed and confused are useless except for retaining capitalism. Votes backed by Socialist understanding will be the irresistible force for change.

The simple statement in clause 8 of our PRINCIPLES of our hostility to all other parties “*whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist*” presents an insurmountable obstacle to the ICC. They really should have read Clause 7. Parties that do not seek working-class emancipation are capitalist parties, whatever they allege themselves to be.

They accuse us of rigidly interpreting Marxism but give no evidence or examples. We are in fact quite happy to let Marx speak for himself, as will be seen.

They quote Luxemburg’s REFORMS OR REVOLUTION and Robert Barltrop’s book, THE MONUMENT, in a vain attempt to show a connection between trade unionism and “... *the class coming to consciousness*”. They would have done better exposing the record of trade union opportunism in sponsoring members of the anti-working class Labour Party to power, in order to run capitalism and enforce the exploitation of wage-labour.

Referring to trade unions in the last few pages of Value, Price and Profit, Marx had this to say:

*They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights incessantly springing up from the never-ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto “A fair day’s wages for a fair day’s work!” they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword “Abolition of the wages system!”* [Marx’s emphasis]

The ICC fails to realise that, in the last 100 years, time has not only tested The SPGB: it has also tested the ICC and those like them dedicated to following leaders, fighting the day-to-day struggle, chasing reforms, and waiting for industrial action to produce consciousness. None of their nostrums has shown any result apart from wasted time.

It is obvious that a majority understanding and wanting Socialism is the key to change. In a significant way, it can be said that we still have capitalism because of ideas such as those of the ICC and their ilk. The same cannot be said about The SPGB.

[Note: Part 2 of this article will be published in The SPGB no.57]

Chinese capitalism is no different.

## PIGS IN THE TROUGH

Labour supporters say vote for them in order to keep the Tories out. This is similar to the ruling pigs in Animal Farm, who silence dissent with the warning: “*Surely, comrades, you do not want Jones back.*” At the end of the book, the pigs sat at the same table as the farmers, just like Labour government ministers dining with the rich. There is no difference between the Tories and Labour. They both support capitalism and the interests of the capitalist class. A vote for Labour is a vote for capitalism.

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# Uncle Joe: A Warning From History

The journalist, Ivor Gabor, recently wrote an article in the INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY (20 March 2005) about his father Jack Gabor, a member of the Communist Party until his death in 1956. We publish a segment of the article because it underlines the false dreams of many politically active workers in the 1930s and 1940s who put their faith in leadership, another capitalist state and a ruthless dictator.

We hold no sympathy. Members of the Communist Party of Great Britain tried to disrupt the meetings of The SPGB, called us “*Social Fascists*” and prevented some members of The SPGB from finding employment for the “*heresy*” of opposing the Second World War. So this is a warning to workers to have nothing to do with the capitalist Left, the ideas associated with Lenin, and those who would lead workers, whether well-meaning or not.

(Jack) was an avid enthusiast for the Party, the Soviet Union and, most of all for Uncle Joe – the evil genius that was Stalin. When the war broke out in 1939, my father’s physical infirmity ensured that the British Army had little interest in him, but Uncle Joe did. Day after day the Party sent my father out to the factory gates where he denounced this “imperialist war” and urged the workers to do nothing to aid the War effort - he was perhaps lucky that the police had other matters to attend to.

Then, in 1941, Hitler invaded Russia and the “imperialist war” suddenly became the global struggle against Fascism. The factory gate meetings continued but now he was urging the workers to go that extra mile to help defeat the Nazis. And he made his own contribution. He went to work in a factory making fighter planes, he became an air-raid warden and a fire-watcher. He did what he was told because his faith in the Party was absolute and it was, for him, a privilege to play a small part in helping Uncle Joe defend the Soviet Union and the first Worker’s State [sic].

In 1956, aged just 44, he was in hospital dying from cancer. To make matters worse, his world also appeared to be dying. His only source of news was provided by the BBC’s Home Service which came crackling through the Bakerlite headphones that were attached to the end of his bed. And what news it was. First there was the Middle East. Here was Israel (the Jewish homeland supported by the Soviet Union) undertaking what appeared to be an imperialist attack on Egypt in cahoots with the old colonial powers of Britain and France, with the “imperialist” United States backing President Nasser, the hero of anti-colonialism, and the Soviet Union offering only a deafening silence. Cut off from his comrades and the Daily Worker, my father would beg of my mother, “What’s the Party line?” and, though she was also a Party member, she had not a clue about “the line” and cared even less.

But there was worse to come. With the Suez fiasco being played out, news came through of the Hungarian uprising being brutally put down by the Soviet Union. At least that was how the BBC was describing it. Though my dad just knew it was “imperialist lies” – what he didn’t know was the “truth”. Again he begged:: “What are the comrades saying, what’s the ‘correct line’ according to the Daily Worker?” But the final straw, came when Comrade Khrushchev stood up at the secret session of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and told the world that dad’s beloved Uncle Joe had been a mass-murdering monster. It was, again, clearly a pack of imperialist lies but there was no one to help dad find his way through this all-enveloping fog. It was all too much, his dreams had come crashing to earth, there was no point in going on. He died in confusion, frustration and disappointment.

ON HOW TO USE THE VOTE To free society of war, crises, unemployment, poverty, the workers must capture control of the state and introduce a new system, one in which the means of production and distribution will be owned in common by the whole of society... Through working class pressure and the disagreements between sections of the capitalist class the workers have obtained the vote, and therefore the capacity to get control of state power and reorganise society on a different basis. At present they simply vote supporters of the capitalist class into power to rule in the interests of the capitalist class.

HISTORICAL MATERIALISM, The SPGB pamphlet, 1975, pp35,38

## OBITUARY - ALFIE TOWERS

It is with sadness that we have to report the loss of an old Socialist, Alfie Towers, who has died at the age of 91. He joined The SPGB in the mid 1930s. His picture from that time appears on the cover of The Monument as part of a

Conference group photograph taken at the Fairfax Hall, Haringey. The photograph covers both sides of the book and Alfie, wearing a trilby hat, is on the back just below the word “*insisting*”.

The present writer first met him at the Rushcroft Road meeting in Brixton in 1950. It turned out on my joining, that he was a member of the then Camberwell Branch. He never missed a Branch meeting and, apart from Rushcroft Road, he also supported propaganda at Earls Court, Hyde Park and East Street, selling literature and discussing Socialism with anyone interested.

Alfie never involved himself in any internal controversies; he always stuck to the Party’s case. He was not in either of the two Branches expelled in 1991 from the Clapham-based party but he later joined the reconstituted The SPGB. He regularly attended our June Summer schools at Marchmont Street, even after he moved to Eastbourne. He also came along to support literature selling at Brighton and Eastbourne conferences. We extend our condolences to his son John, and to his other family members.

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## Reply To A Leninist

Following a discussion on Lenin in Hyde Park, we were asked about The SPGB’s criticism of him. The SPGB spent a great deal of time during the 20th century demonstrating that the Bolshevism associated with Lenin was not “*Marxist*” but a distortion of what Marx wrote, and that what was established by the Bolshevik coup d’etat in 1917 was not socialism but state capitalism. True, Lenin and the Bolshevik party spoke the language of Marxism but on important Marxian principles they rejected what Marx wrote.

Lenin’s theory of the vanguard party was his most serious departure from the writings of Karl Marx. Marx stated that the socialist revolution could only be achieved by a class-conscious working class. No one can do it for them. It has to be the work of the immense majority, in the interests of the immense majority.

Lenin rejected this view. He was quoted by John Reed that, by themselves, the working class would take 1000 years to establish Socialism. This arrogant elitism was compounded by Lenin when, in WHAT IS TO BE DONE, he stated that Socialism could only come about by the dedicated activity of professional revolutionaries with himself as leader.

Standing in the Marxist tradition, The SPGB repudiated Lenin and declared:

*There is no easier road to Socialism than the education of the workers in Socialism and their organisation to establish it by democratic methods.*

SOCIALIST STANDARD August, 1920

Lenin also rejected Marx’s theory of the state. For Marx, the state was the “*executive of the bourgeoisie*” (COMMUNIST MANIFESTO). The working class can only establish Socialism by gaining control of the machinery of government, and using it to abolish class society by establishing the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production. With the establishment of Socialism, the state “*withers away*” (Engels, ANTI-DUHRING). Throughout his revolutionary life, Marx insisted that the working class must gain control of the state before establishing Socialism. And in his mature writings, Marx increasingly saw the possibility of the working class taking political action through the vote.

Lenin had an altogether different theory of the state. Lenin went on to twist what Marx said about the state giving the impression that Marx had meant that this was to occur before the working class had won state power. The SPGB has shown Lenin’s book THE STATE AND REVOLUTION to be one of the most dishonest and deceitful books ever written in political theory.

Marx was also clear that there was no separate social system between capitalism and Socialism. Yet Bolshevik policy distorted what Marx wrote about the lower and higher stages of Communism to convert these into two distinct social systems.

Marx stated, in WAGES, PRICE AND PROFIT, that Socialism meant the abolition of the wages system. Yet a key characteristic of Russia from 1917 onwards was that it had a wages system, class exploitation and class struggle. From the perspective of the working class living in Russia, there was no difference to the class system existing there and that prevailing in other parts of the world, like the US and Britain. Whether surplus value goes to the state or to private companies is of no interest to the working class. What is of importance is that state capitalism and private capitalism are two sides of the same exploitative coin.

As early as 1918, the Party argued, on the basis of Marx's theory of history, that the conditions in Russia were not ripe for Socialist revolution. We noted that the country was largely peasant-based, agrarian with a small working class. These were not the conditions for Socialism but the conditions for a primitive capitalism which is exactly what took place until Russia became no different from any other advanced capitalist country.

This is what The SPGB wrote (SOCIALIST STANDARD, August 1918):

Is this huge mass of people, numbering about 160,00,000 and spread over eight and a half millions of square miles, ready for Socialism? Are the hunters of the North, the struggling peasant proprietors of the South, the agricultural wage-slaves of the Central Provinces, and the industrial wage-slaves of the towns convinced of the necessity, and equipped with the knowledge requisite, for the establishment of the social ownership of the means of life? Unless a mental revolution such as the world has ever known before has taken place, or an economic change has occurred immensely more rapidly than history has ever recorded, the answer is "No!"

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION: WHERE IT FAILS

This passage was written by a Marxist. Jack Fitzgerald was a founder member of The SPGB, a building worker by trade. He lived in Finsbury Square at about the same time as Lenin was living there. He was a living refutation of Lenin's elitism, the idea that workers could not understand their own class interests and become Socialists. We urge you to read what Marx and Engels actually wrote, and compare what they wrote to what Lenin said they wrote in the pages of his dishonest book, THE STATE AND REVOLUTION.

And we would urge you not to pay great attention to the various self-proclaimed leaders of the Left. No matter how well-meaning in their intentions, they prevent you thinking and acting in your own class interests. This was Marx's point about Socialism being established by a class "*for itself*". Leaders have held back the working class. We do not need them.

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## Taxation and Wages

[Note: a reply to one of our subscribers, E Teasdale, who wrote asking us about whether taxation hurts the working class, as well as the capitalist class.]

Taxation is an important question because it highlights where specific class interests lie within the wage-capital relationship. The first thing to understand about capitalism is that there are two contending classes: a capitalist class who own and control the means of production and a working class who do not.

Of the working class Marx said that they were:

*Free labourers, in the double sense that neither they themselves form part and parcel of the means of production, as in the case of slaves, bondsmen, &c., nor do the means of production belong to them, as in the case of peasant-proprietors; they are, therefore, free from, unencumbered by, any means of production of their own*

CAPITAL VOL. 1, Ch. XXVI, The Secret of Primitive Accumulation

Each class has its own respective income. The capitalist class receive unearned income in the form of rent, interest and profit. The working class receive an earned income in the form of wages and salaries. We will leave the question of the unearned income flowing to the capitalist class to one side for a moment. What needs to be asked first is what

constitutes a wage or a salary.

To help answer this question we have the valuable contribution provided by Marx. He showed that the working class sell a commodity to the capitalist class. He called this commodity “*labour-power*”, the worker’s mental and physical ability to work. Labour-power has a use value to the employer when put to work, and an exchange value as a wage or salary. /p>

The historical basis of labour-power as a commodity was commented upon by Marx:>

Nature does not produce on the one side owners of money or commodities, and on the other men possessing nothing but their own labour-power. This relation has no natural basis, neither is its social basis one that is common to all historical periods

CAPITAL VOL. 1, Ch. VI, *The Buying and Selling of Labour-Power*

A wage for Marx has a value which determines its price. But how is the wage arrived at? Marx said that the wage is calculated by the socially necessary amount of labour that goes into its production. In a given country, at a given period, “*the average quantity of the means of subsistence necessary for the labourer is practically known*” (CAPITAL VOL. 1 Ch. VI).

In a simpler way we can say that the wage is equivalent to workers and their families need to produce and reproduce themselves as members of the working class.

The value of labour-power resolves itself into the value of a definite quantity of the means of subsistence. It therefore varies with the value of these means or with the quantity of labour requisite for their production

CAPITAL VOLUME 1, Ch. VI

If the working class did not get the wage or salary to buy these commodities then they would exist in a “*crippled state*” and would be of no use to the capitalist class.

*The minimum limit of the value of labour-power is determined by the value of commodities, without the daily supply of which the labourer cannot renew his vital energy, consequently by the value of those means of subsistence that are physically indispensable. If the price of labour power falls to this minimum, it falls below its value, since under such circumstances it can only be maintained and developed only in a crippled state. But the value of every commodity is determined by the labour-time requisite to turn out so as to be of normal quality (ibid ).*

This brings us to the question of taxation. If workers needed £300 per week in order to live and a tax of twenty pounds was levied on this figure, all that happens is that the employer could only buy the labour power for £320 per week. What has happened is that the burden of the taxation has been passed from the worker to the capitalist.>

If a tax was levied on the wage - the wage that buys the commodities to keep the worker alive -, the employer would be faced with a struggle by the employee for higher wages. And this is precisely what happens. An increase in the level or rate of taxation results in workers demanding higher rates of pay, just as happens when prices rise.

Ultimately this process works its way through to the employers and shows up, on the accountant’s balance-sheet, as higher labour costs. This is why The SPGB argues that in reality taxation is not a working-class issue.

However, it is a problem for the employing class, especially when they have businesses which must compete with those of capitalists in other countries. That is why the CBI and the Institute of Directors and all those politicians – Tory or Labour - who represent the interests of the capitalist class, who see their party as the “*party of business*”, make such a big effort to keep taxes and public (state) spending low.

That is why these politicians are applauded by the capitalists and their organisations when they insist on cuts in government spending. From their point of view, anything which raises their costs – especially their labour costs-is seen as damaging to their business interests. From the workers’ point of view, however, the income tax paid via the PAYE system has never been money in their pockets: it is simply a notional figure on the payslip.

That this is the case was shown by Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations* and by David Ricardo in his *Principles of*

Political Economy. Edwin Cannan, who taught economics at the London School of Economics, also held that taxation was a burden that ultimately fell on the propertied class. You could hardly call these three writers Marxists.

But Marx held a labour theory of value by which to analyse the way capitalism is, and not the way it superficially appears to be. Workers continue to work for their employers beyond the period of time the value of their work equals the value of their wages and salaries. This additional work they work for free for the employer, and it is here that exploitation takes place. The surplus value, their unpaid labour, generated by exploitation, is where the capitalist class get their unearned income from.

If the wage of the working class cannot be taxed because it reflects their ability to work, the only source of income that can be taxed falls on surplus value in the form of rent, interest and profit, that is, on those who live off surplus value, regardless of whether taxes are levied on company profits, rates, income tax, and so on.

Workers may feel they have been taxed when they see National Insurance contributions and income tax deductions on their wage packets, but they are confusing what they see with what is actually the case. They also feel this way too when they pay a utility bill or buy goods or services, and see that in addition to the price charged, there is a percentage added on of VAT.

It suits politicians to have an accountancy method of collecting taxation from across the economy because the capitalist class and their political agents spend a large part of their politics moving the burden of taxation from one part of the capitalist class to the other. The Labour Party did this with student loans. Up until they changed the rules the burden of higher education was spread throughout the capitalist class, while now falls largely onto capitalists employing graduates.

Marx's labour theory of value was also able to explain the difference in income within the working class. For educated skilled labour, we must add the costs of education in terms of the value of commodities:

*The expenses of education enter pro tanto into the total value spent in its production*  
CAPITAL VOL. 1, Ch. VI

Unlike other commodities, the value of labour power has a “*moral*” element in it which would vary from country to country, and over time.

In contradistinction therefore to the case of other commodities, there enters into the determination of the value of labour-power a historical and moral element. Nevertheless, in a given country, at a given period, the average quantity of the means of subsistence necessary for the labour is practically known (ibid.).

Marx's labour theory of value not only shows how exploitation takes place, why taxation comes from profits and not wages, but also shows that the demand for equal pay is deluded:

*The cry for an equality of wages rests, therefore, upon a mistake, is an insane wish never to be fulfilled... Upon the basis of the wages system the value of labouring power is settled like that of every other commodity; and as different kinds of labouring power have different values, or require different quantities of labour for their production, they must fetch different prices in the labour market. To clamour for equal or even equitable retribution on the basis of the wages system is the same as to clamour for freedom on the basis of the slavery system.*  
WAGES, PRICES AND PROFIT, VI Labouring Power

So, in conclusion, the working class do not pay taxation. The capitalist class do. The employers have an interest in the question of taxation while the working class do not. And here is the revolutionary point of all this analysis. The real political focus of attention by the working class should be class exploitation, the wages system and its abolition.

## HISTORY AND HALF-TRUTHS

On 9 May 2005, President George W Bush stood on the podium in Moscow's Red Square, alongside the ex-KGB man, Putin, who spoke of ‘liberation’ and ‘freedom’. The occasion was to commemorate the end of World War Two, a war in which the Soviet Union lost at least 27 million people - it is hard to estimate the actual numbers, what with



civilian deaths from starvation and disease, deportation ('ethnic cleansing') of Chechens and Cossacks, and the summary harsh treatment of any returning POWs.

What an irony that Mr Bush should have been there, praising those who had opposed Hitler. Did no-one mention the awkward fact that Prescott Bush, his grandfather, actively helped Hitler? That the Bush family fortune was founded on his heroic work as Hitler's banker, with Union Bank as an 'interlocking concern' with the German Steel Trust, enabling it to continue producing what Hitler's war-machine required, through the Thirties, right on into the war, and even after the US, after Pearl Harbour, was reluctantly dragged into the war?

The Communist Party used to be world champions at distorting the past – remember how they wriggled and squirmed at any mention of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact! It seems the White House has now caught up even with the Kremlin.

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# Outsourcing and the Class Struggle

Marx made the point that the class struggle is the "*motor force of history*". The class struggle is a two-way process between capitalists who own the means of production and an exploited working class who do not.

Recently, Stephen King, managing director of economics at HSBC, expressed his considered view of the current state of the class struggle:

Workers - whether acting as individuals or forming unions - have lost their ability to demand compensation for real income losses associated with higher import prices. In part, this loss of worker power reflects more mobile labour. If you walk into your employer's office and demand a pay increase as compensation for an increase in oil prices, the chances are that the employer will simply outsource your job to some other part of the world where labour is cheap, but at the same time reasonably well-educated (both India and China spring to mind).

THE INDEPENDENT, 17 January 2005

The capitalist class, whom Stephen King represents, believes that it can strut around the world with impunity and has a decisive edge in the class struggle.

However, the class struggle exists in China and India as it does in the rest of the world. Workers from less developed countries can and do learn from workers from elsewhere (and vice versa). All workers have a common interest in the abolition of capitalism. A world capitalist class faces a world working class: their interests are diametrically opposed.

The working class only have themselves to blame for the fact that they still find themselves locked in a day-to-day struggle with the capitalist class. Workers continue to vote for capitalist politicians. Workers place their faith in a system that can never be run in their interests. Workers hold religious and nationalist ideas that act against their own class interest, and which are used by capitalist politicians to split the workers against each other.

Capital is only as powerful as workers let it become. It is a social relationship. That is why Marx pointed out that the continual struggle for higher wages never resolves anything. The only political course open to the class-conscious working class is the abolition of the wages system.

## SOCIALISM - OR REFORMS?

Only convinced socialists can work for Socialism, but reform movements attract conscious as well as unknowing defenders of Capitalism.

Questions of the Day, The SPGB pamphlet, 1932, p1

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# Some Notes About Workers' Savings

The Labour Government lectures workers on the need to become self-reliant. Workers are urged to save for old age and expect less from the State. They are urged to embrace ‘the Protestant work ethic’, which values thrift and punishes hedonism. No such lecture is given to the capitalist class. Such lectures by the Labour Government ignore the fact that financial institutions are set up primarily to serve the needs of capitalists and not the workers.

The ability of workers to save money depends on the degree of their success in getting higher wages from the employers. Although the total amount of workers’ savings may look considerable, it is always only a small part of the total savings, which is principally made up by the capitalists’ contribution. At least half of all company profits are not paid out as dividends but are re-invested as capital to make more profits. And wealthy capitalists save other large amounts out of their unearned income from rent, interest and profit.

Most commentators on the question of savings present a shallow and unhelpful account of the subject. The question of class is not considered because academic economics refuse to consider class relations as having any “*experiential reality*”. The different meaning and usage of money is also discounted. Money as wages going to workers is not the same as money as capital being invested in businesses by capitalists.

Successive Governments have been worried about the limited amount workers save, not because of some compassionate concern for the working class, but because of the vast amount of taxation needed from employers in order to provide state provision for unemployment, sickness and old age. The Government, whether Tory or Labour, has spent a great deal of effort in order to persuade workers to take their savings from “*under the mattress*”, and invest in savings banks, building societies and banks, but that does not alter the total of the limited amount of workers’ savings.

Over a decade ago, THE TIMES commented that saving rates out of personal income were the lowest for thirty years, forgetting that capitalism had just emerged from a serious depression which had seen unemployment go up to over 3,000,000 workers. Following the last economic depression in the early 1990s, little has changed:

*A study by independent financial advice group IFA Promotion found 71 per cent of UK adults claim they cannot save a penny more than they do now, and 12 million ( 26 per cent) are saving nothing at all.*

EDINBURGH EVENING NEWS, 19 January 2005

When trying to make Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) attractive to workers, the Labour Government let it be known that only two million people in Britain had savings over £50,000 while 50% of the adult population had less than £250 in savings at any given time

Most of the nonsense talked about savings and the working class derives from Keynes. An integral part of Keynes’s doctrine on the trade cycle, set out in his General Theory (1936), is that as incomes go up, not only do savings go up as well, but that a higher proportion of wage income is saved. This erroneous assumption was, along with full employment and a fitter working class drawing less and less on the state, one of the principle foundations of the Welfare State. Experience shows, borne out by THE TIMES article and recent Government statistics, that workers generally behave in exactly the opposite way. When real incomes from wages and salaries go up and workers ought to save more, as Keynes believed they would, workers actually spend their income.

What Keynes forgot, because he discounted class relations from his analysis, is that the wages system is a form of rationing in which the needs of the working class are not met. What workers need, as opposed to what they actually get as wages, is limited by their pay packet. If workers, in the course of the class struggle, get more money through higher wages, then they can expand a little into buying what they need. Workers would only start saving seriously when faced with the prospect of a downturn in trade or a threat to their jobs, like the workers at MG Rover. However, economic crises break at the height of the boom when real wages have been rising, at a point when most workers and employers believe the current boom will last forever.

Keynes hoped for and expected the reverse, partly because he believed that the implementation of his theory of

avoiding unemployment by the Government would create conditions of continued full employment. In this he was hopelessly wrong. He wanted workers to save “*in good times*” and spend “*in bad times*”, on the assumption that full employment would lead to a prolonged period of savings of a proportion of their wages by the working class.

The question workers should ask themselves is why they should have to save and make provision for “*the bad times*”. Surely this is conceding that capitalism cannot meet the needs of all society, that it is fundamentally tilted in favour of the class who own capital, who exploit the working class, and who do not have to save because of the vast unearned wealth they have at their disposal.

Capitalism does not exist to meet human needs. The economic motive of capitalists is profit and the accumulation of capital. Throughout the world today, production is not being used to its full capacity or is being used for the purpose of war and features of capitalism like advertising and finance.

In a Socialist society where production would take place to meet human need, the rationing of the wages system and the need to save for hard times would not take place. Socialism would be able to meet the needs of all society, no matter what their circumstances. People would get the education, health provision and so on that they need to live worthwhile lives. The question of savings, like wages and salaries, is only a question within the context of capitalism. And capitalism is a social system in which the workers’ interests can never be served.

## LABOUR’S TROUBLED “TRIBAL” HEARTLANDS

As a teenager John Harris became an enthusiastic member of the Labour Party, opposed Militant, canvassed for New Labour, and was “*giddy... with the thrill of the 1997 Labour landslide*”(p4). But now, disillusioned, he has written a book: *SO NOW WHO DO WE VOTE FOR?*

His opposition is on the usual Labour grounds: opposition to the war in Iraq, to student top-up fees, to private companies running state schools and hospitals. But not a word about the failure of the Labour Party to stand for the interest of labour – the working class – against that of capital, let alone its failure to stand for Socialism. To Harris – and presumably to many others like him – his Labourism comes down to: “*a progressive taxation system, a mixed economy, unilateral nuclear disarmament and comprehensive education*” (p2). ‘*Socialist*’ is a word he avoids, preferring instead “*progressive*” (p17).

He has interviewed a few prominent Labour people who are mostly alienated from Blairism and ‘New’ Labour, but who still insist there is only one possible way to vote - for Labour. Tony Benn is a classic case of this schizoid thinking: refusing to be interviewed, he wrote: “*my interest is in reclaiming the Labour Party*” (p75). Yet, in June 2004, Benn was opposing the party as lacking any real support: “*You can’t imagine canvassing and people saying, ‘oh yes, I’m New Labour, I’d like to privatise the Post Office, I’d like to have more loans for students and oh yes, let’s have another war’*” (p162).

Kilfoyle and Hattersley, both former government ministers are similarly afflicted: opposed to the Labour government’s policies but unable to withdraw their election-time support. Harris is honest enough to see for what it is that his own support for Labour, come hell or high water, is due to “*that intuitive, visceral, aching Tory-hatred that had taken root during the Thatcher years*”, a mere “*unthinking tribalism*” (p70).

It is as irrational as the belief in the Virgin Birth or the Second Coming of Christ to suppose that ‘Labour’ – old or new – when in government could ever defend the interests of the working class, of labour as against capital. Like any party in government, it runs capitalism in the interest of the capitalist class, never in the interest of the workers. Hardly surprising, then, that Harris and many others are invariably disappointed and dismayed by their party when it’s in power.

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# Q and A: Would Socialism Be An Impractical Utopia?

Adrian Baxter emailed us the following queries:

My questions are these: what would the socialist utopia look like? And would anyone seriously want to live there? How would socialists set about dismantling the labour markets, the money markets, the consumer goods markets and the production markets?

One possible response is that you do not know. But this really isn't good enough. Because if enough of us were persuaded of the irresolvable defects of a capitalist economy (which is presumably what socialists would like to happen), we could then choose democratically to live in a market-free society, and these questions would be very real.

Would socialists be in favour of letting a minority, of workers who wanted to remain wage bound and employers willing to employ them, carry on producing commodities between themselves? What about gambling? How would a socialist society prevent a group of people to bet on sexual favours? Presumably the answer is "no" on both counts. More likely the Socialist majority would be able to convince those workers who still want wages and salaries to work, those capitalists willing to employ them, and the gamblers of the world to scale down their habits. Perhaps a gambling island or a capitalist island could be found for them.

What happens in a socialist society when things do go wrong? What about an accident at work, or someone run down by a drunken driver? What contingency plans would exist for the mentally insane? Would prison doors be opened to murderers, paedophiles and rapists the day after the revolution? Or are they all supposed to reform by the strength of the Socialist argument. Socialists claim to be practical so where is your practical consideration to these questions?

I accept that capitalism has not got all the answers. Capitalism is guilty of many things. But surely reform not abolition is the answer? If you are a wage worker, the question of buying food or finding a roof over your head is not insurmountable.

When you are wageless and at the mercy of a utopian experiment that has never been tried before you are dead.

>Our reply

Let us start with the point Mr Baxter made at the end of his letter.

Firstly, Mr Baxter is mistaken in regarding a society based on common ownership as something which has never been tried before. If that were the case, then he might be right to regard it as a dangerous "*utopian experiment*" which would almost certainly fail.

However, anyone who has studied the development of social institutions is aware of the existence of past societies, worldwide, which were based on this principle, and which lacked any class system, or markets. We argue that the class system of modern capitalism has developed out of previous class systems, also based on the exploitation of the workers – the modern wage-slave being the latest, and we say the last, type of exploited class.

Further we do not claim that Socialist society would by some form of magic be able somehow to wish away all manner of problems, instantly. However, if capitalism was capable of being reformed in such a way as to do away with poverty, unemployment, crises and war, surely by now some clever politicians would have found a way to do this? We have had generations of politicians, in a supposedly 'democratic' electoral system in Britain and in other countries where the majority of voters are working class, and yet these problems remain as intractable as ever.

The best the reformers can provide is some sort of sticking-plaster temporary fix, which sooner or later comes unstuck. For instance, after the mass unemployment of the Thirties, politicians of all the major parties agreed that in postwar Britain they would be pledged to a policy of 'full employment'. But this lasted only as long as the economic conditions of the period permitted and, after a while, the (Labour) government of the day declared this was no longer possible.

One problem which is at the heart of the capitalist system, and so will never be reformed away, is the way the working class is exploited through the wages system. Since a part of all the wealth produced by the working class is used to enrich the capitalist class, and so to increase the amount of capital at their disposal, this system is not in the interests of the working class. There is an inevitable conflict of interests between those who must sell their labour power in order to live, and those who can choose whether or not to employ us, and on what terms. So, being practical about capitalism, we say that reforms are not the answer now, any more than they have been in the past.

Mr Baxter claims that, for a wage worker, “*the question of buying food or finding a roof over your head is not insurmountable*”. That may be the case most of the time but in times of high unemployment, when wages are forced lower, a worker and his/her family may well find these simple necessities hard to afford. In some regions of Britain, housing is relatively cheap but jobs are scarce while, at the same time, in London and the South East, where jobs are relatively easy to find, housing costs have soared beyond the reach of most average-paid workers, even with a 100% mortgage. Similar problems, with local variations, can be found in all so-called advanced capitalist countries. We say the cause of such problems is the class system, which is worldwide. Perhaps Mr Baxter needs to get out in the real world a bit more, use his eyes, or read the newspapers.

He asks whether a Socialist society would let “*a minority, of workers who wanted to remain wage bound and employers willing to employ them, carry on producing commodities between themselves*”. First point: Socialism can only be brought about by a class-conscious majority of the working class, who have organised themselves democratically to achieve this change. Next: Socialism is democratic or it is not Socialism.

The SPGB has consistently argued these points for over 100 years. So it is not a question of “*letting*” a minority do something so utterly daft and pointless. If they wanted to do this, it would be of no great importance – so long as they did not try to impose or enforce their, minority, choice onto the majority who want a better way of life.

We would be foolish to try to prescribe just exactly how a Socialist society in the future will deal with particular problems – especially as in today’s world there are such rapid and far-reaching changes in technology. Yesterday’s fix becomes all too often tomorrow’s problem. Take, for instance, nuclear power: initially when nuclear power plants were built, we were told that these would produce cheap, clean and safe fuel for generations to come. Now, however, these ageing nuclear power plants are having to be dismantled at vast cost, never having produced cheap power, and with the dangerous problem of nuclear waste left still unresolved as a nasty legacy for future generations to deal with.

Incidentally, being unable to predict exactly how particular problems would be dealt with in the future is actually the situation we are all in today. No-one can predict exactly when the next economic crisis will crop up, or even what is the sensible thing to do about your saving for a pension.

Who among Enron’s employees, who lost their pensions as well as their jobs, predicted the collapse of Enron? And in Britain, what of Marconi, which collapsed in months from being a sound investment to a junk bond and bankruptcy? Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the German economy, with over 10% unemployed (the highest rate of unemployment since the early Thirties), has taken ages to recover. Was that predicted? Likewise with once fast-growing Japan where so many businesses have collapsed, and the rate of growth has been around zero for so many years.

Clearly, capitalism has problems to which the cleverest of economists and politicians have yet to find an answer. So it would be impractical surely – dare we say “*utopian*”? – to recommend continuing with this system.

Mr Baxter asks us: *How would socialists set about dismantling the labour markets, the money markets, the consumer goods markets and the production markets?* In trying to answer his question(s), it is worthwhile to consider both what it is that Socialists are aiming to achieve, and also the preconditions necessary for Socialism.

An essential precondition for Socialism is that this should be clearly understood and supported by a sufficient majority of the working class, not just in a few countries but in the majority of countries. That is especially so the more the economies of the world become increasingly ‘globalised’, with companies operating in a number of different countries and a worldwide division of labour. No country or even continent today can be self-sufficient.

Even capitalism relies largely on the consent or acceptance of the majority of workers, since compulsion, coercion, dictatorship and tyranny are expensive and inefficient ways of running things. A Socialist society – being based on common ownership and democratic control of all the means of producing and distributing wealth “*by and in the interest of the whole community*” – must rely on people having a strong sense of what is socially responsible, i.e. what is “*in the interest of the whole community*”.

In order to dismantle the class system and hence all the various markets, including especially the “*labour market*”,

the Socialist Party must gain political power. That is because the state with the armed forces, police, jails, judiciary etc, exist primarily to protect and defend the class interests of the capitalist class, most especially if these are thought to be threatened. To ensure that these forces cannot be used against the Socialist majority, the Socialist Party needs to have control of them – and in Britain it is Parliament which controls the armed forces and police. Socialism cannot just be wished into existence. Nor can it be established bit-by-bit, e.g. by establishing communes, little mini-utopias. These might be tolerated on the fringes but, if they threatened the essential interests of the capitalist class, they would be destroyed.

Our argument is that a class-conscious, politically organised, Socialist movement, backed by the vast majority of the working class would be in a position, having achieved control over “*the machinery of government*”, to adapt institutions and organisations so as to serve the interests of the whole community.

Some institutions – e.g. the vast tax-gathering apparatus – would be of no use to a Socialist society. This would mean a large number of workers whose skills and abilities could be redeployed in more socially useful work. Along with the change from production for profit to production for use, this would mean that there would be more willing hands and less work to be done. Think, for a moment, how much wasted labour is involved in competitive production for profit: the duplication of effort in producing umpteen different brands of baked beans and fizzy drinks, advertising and promoting them, and so on. Or the hordes of wage-slaves employed in the City, in banks, investment firms and insurance companies, and the armies of civil servants calculating benefits, pensions and subsidies.

Behind Mr Baxter’s questions there is also a wariness: he probably fears that Socialism would be a nasty totalitarian society based on compulsion: “*What would the socialist utopia look like? And would anyone seriously want to live there?*”

Clearly he has failed to understand some key points about Socialism: a society based on common ownership, democratically controlled, by the whole community and in the interest of the whole community. This would mean it would be run on the principle of “*from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs*”.

It is hard to see how anyone could seriously object to such a system. We might ask Mr Baxter: “*would anyone in their right minds seriously want to live under capitalism?*”

Mr Baxter claims he cannot see how Socialism would cope:

“*What about an accident at work, or someone run down by a drunken driver? What contingency plans would exist for the mentally insane? Would prison doors be opened to murderers, paedophiles and rapists the day after the revolution?*” - and so on.

The list of social problems we encounter all the time under capitalism, and which capitalism is clearly unable to solve, is almost endless. Consider accidents at work: most of these are in fact avoidable, and are caused by the compulsion to work fast, rather than with workers’ safety as a top priority.

Socialists are not so unrealistic as to suppose that, “*the day after the revolution*”, all these problems would disappear overnight. However it is also not unrealistic to argue that, since to achieve Socialism will require massive community support, a well-established Socialist consciousness and political organisation among *all* sections of the community, this would result in a growth of social cooperation. Hence, such problems as occur, could be more easily and sensibly dealt with than is the case in capitalism. Much that capitalism makes impossible or too expensive would be possible in Socialism.

To conclude, Mr Baxter’s questions and fears indicate the blinkered mentality of one who mistakenly believes that, because capitalism exists, it always has existed and so must continue. So, Mr Baxter, “*all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds*” – or is it? To argue this way is to shut one’s mind to the possibility of changing society for the better, and to resign oneself to a continuance of the exploitation of the many by the few, along with a continuance of capitalism’s social problems, such as war and poverty.

Yet it is the working class (over 95% of the population) who run capitalism’s various businesses from top to bottom, who are the managers that their employers rely on, and without whom the capitalist class cannot survive. The



Socialist proposition is that workers should take responsibility for producing and distributing wealth *in the interest of the whole community*, not of a tiny minority.

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# Object and Declaration of Principles

## Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

## Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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